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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

242nd Meeting

Monday, 30 November 1998, 10.30 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Ka . . . . . (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Today the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is holding a solemn meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome Mr. Didier Opertti, President of the General Assembly; Ms. Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Mr. A. Peter Burleigh, President of the Security Council; Mr. John de Saram, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization and representative of Palestine; and Mr. Alvaro de Soto, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Political Affairs. I wish also to welcome representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as members of the press and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this solemn meeting.

I would now like to invite everyone present to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of all those who have given their lives for the cause of the Palestinian people and the return of peace in the region.

The participants observed a minute of silence.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Please allow me at this point to make a statement in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

We welcome the presence here today of the Deputy Secretary-General, representing Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whom we thank for all his support of the activities of our Committee and particularly for his efforts in the service of peace in the Middle East region.

We have gathered here for the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which commemorates the adoption of resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, by which the General Assembly decided to divide Palestine into two States, one Arab and one Jewish, with a special international status for the city of Jerusalem.

During this past year, as Israelis celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their State, Palestinians everywhere mourned *al-Nakba*, the catastrophe which led to their dispossession and exile. This fateful anniversary, coming as it has during a period of growing tension on the ground and grave international concern over the prolonged stalemate in the peace process, has led to increasing recognition that the Palestinian people can no longer remain dispossessed and denied its national rights and that the international community cannot remain indifferent to the deteriorating situation on the ground.

There has been a renewed surge of solidarity with the Palestinian people fighting for its rights, as well as an intensification of efforts to move forward in the peace

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negotiations. We are gratified today by the fact that certain resolutions of the General Assembly — notably those on the participation of Palestine in the work of the United Nations, on the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and on the Bethlehem 2000 project — have been adopted by an overwhelming majority.

The enhanced status accorded to Palestine at this session and Chairman Arafat's participation for the first time in the general debate of the Assembly are positive steps towards the full recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people and its future attaintment of full state membership.

This commemoration today should therefore give further impetus to our joint efforts to help the Palestinian people at this crucial time in its history. The presence here today of so many participants testifies not only to the concern of the United Nations at the fact that the question of Palestine is still unresolved after so many years, but also to its determination to intensify its efforts for the achievement of a just and lasting peace based on international legitimacy.

The peace process has now reached a crucial stage. It is encouraging that the Wye River Memorandum has unblocked the nine-month stalemate in the negotiations and moved the two sides closer to the permanent status negotiations. We earnestly hope that this additional agreement, as well as the earlier ones, will be implemented in all their aspects in order to restore hope in the peace process and the mutual trust so fundamental to the establishment of a lasting peace.

We are seriously concerned, however, by the stepped-up construction of new settlements and other unilateral acts which seek to establish advantage on the ground in advance of the final status negotiations. Settlements embody a policy of permanent occupation that runs counter to the spirit and letter of the peace process and to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Far from promoting Israeli security, as argued by the Government, their growth is a source of constant friction, instability and insecurity and can only seriously undermine efforts to achieve reconciliation.

Since 1967, the international community has been unanimous in opposing settlement construction and any other action taken by the occupying Power to change the legal status, physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem. The Security Council has adopted numerous resolutions determining that such actions are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, declaring them null and void. The General Assembly and other United Nations organs and intergovernmental bodies have adopted similar positions. The settlements will continue to be considered illegal, no matter how many are built or how many settlers are installed in the occupied territory.

As we approach the end of the transitional period envisaged in the 1993 Declaration of Principles, the Palestinian people will need the solidarity of the international community more than ever. Although only the parties themselves can make peace, the close involvement of the international community in defending international legitimacy, providing political and economic support and promoting regional cooperation will be of fundamental importance to the success of the negotiations.

In this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as we stand on the threshold of the new millennium, these events should inspire us to redouble our efforts to ensure that the rights of peoples everywhere are respected and that peace and justice prevail throughout the world, particularly in that land which is holy to the adherents of the three major religions and has experienced so much suffering and bloodshed. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has pledged to do everything possible next year, in cooperation with Member States and sectors of the international community, for the achievement of this noble objective. I would like to invite all those present at this commemoration, representing States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, to do the same in the supreme interest of peace.

I now have the honour to give the floor to Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette.

The Deputy Secretary-General: First of all, let me say how pleased I am to participate for the first time in this annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, organized by the Committee in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly.

On this day 51 years ago, the General Assembly passed a resolution which, if implemented, would have created an Arab and a Jewish State in Palestine, living side by side in peaceful coexistence. Year after year, this anniversary provides the international community with an opportunity — and an obligation — to refocus its attention on the distressing fact that after more than half a century,

the issue of Palestine remains unresolved. It is an occasion for us to recommit ourselves to the objective of achieving a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East, in the interest of Israelis and Palestinians but also as part of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East — so essential to peace and security in general.

Since taking office, the Secretary-General has made every effort to support the peace process in the Middle East — and to mobilize the resources of the United Nations family to help create an economic and social environment favourable to peace. In the course of his visit to the region earlier this year, the Secretary-General witnessed the hardship and deprivation caused by decades of conflict, as well as of the yearning on all sides for a peaceful future. He took that opportunity to appeal to the leaders of all parties to continue building on the achievements of the peace process, to make every effort to resume the negotiations in earnest, and to take the difficult decisions needed to move towards reconciliation and cooperation.

The recent signing of the Wye River Memorandum by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization is an encouraging development. It came after many months of uncertainty and concern over the future of the peace process, fuelled by growing mistrust between the parties and rising tensions in the region. The implementation of the agreement has started. The United Nations earnestly hopes that it will be carried out in all its aspects and will pave the way for the resumption of negotiations on all tracks.

Regrettably, incidents of violence by elements opposed to the peace process have continued to cost lives and mar progress. The United Nations has repeatedly condemned such acts. At the same time, we have appealed to the parties not to be swayed by such incidents, but instead to redouble their efforts in pursuit of a lasting solution to the conflict.

It is necessary for the parties to address not only the manifestations but also the causes of violence, to restore hope, mutual confidence and a spirit of partnership, and to work together for a future of peace, cooperation and good-neighbourliness.

More than 50 years after the resolution whose adoption we mark today, and as we near the end of the process originally envisaged under the 1993 Declaration of Principles, positive advances along this road are needed urgently. It is also essential to create the political and economic conditions that will enable this hope to be realized in practice. A rapid improvement in living conditions in the Palestinian territories is an essential accompaniment to the peace negotiations. In that regard, there has been serious concern at the steady decline of the Palestinian economy in recent years, largely due to the impact of security measures, the lack of free movement of persons and goods between the West Bank and Gaza, and the Palestinians' lack of control over their natural resources.

Real progress in the fields of employment, health, education, human rights and industrial and commercial development is urgently needed to strengthen support for the peace process. Despite the ongoing efforts of the United Nations, in particular those of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Development Programme and other programmes and agencies present on the ground, much still needs to be done to alleviate existing conditions and to lay a solid foundation for future development.

We firmly believe that the international community can and should go further. In particular, the serious financial situation faced by UNRWA requires intensified efforts by all concerned to ensure that the quality and level of services for Palestine refugees can be maintained as an essential contribution to stability in the area.

In conclusion, I should like to extend my thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its efforts in support of the Palestinian people and for a future of peace in the Middle East. And I should like to renew the pledge that the United Nations family will continue to provide all possible expertise and assistance in humanitarian relief and in the fields of economic and social development in order to contribute towards creating the necessary conditions for peace.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to ask the Deputy Secretary-General to convey to Mr. Kofi Annan our thanks for all his efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, as well as for the support he has always given the work of the Committee.

I would like to apologize to my friend, Mr. Didier Opertti, President of the General Assembly, to whom I should have given the floor first. It is now my pleasure to call on him.

Mr. Opertti (Uruguay), President of the General Assembly (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to say that I am honoured to take part in this commemorative meeting in my capacity as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. In December 1977, the, in its resolution 32/40 B, called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Traditionally, on this day the international community renews its pledge to the Palestinian people to continue to support its legitimate aspirations and demands on the basis of the principles of international law, of the United Nations Charter and of the resolutions of this Organization.

Since the very beginning of the United Nations, the question of Palestine has been a matter of major concern and interest to its Members. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), partitioning Palestine into two States, one Arab and one Jewish, with an economic union between them and a special international regime for the city of Jerusalem. Half a century later, this remains the oldest unresolved issue on our Organization's agenda.

Some five years ago, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations reached a crucial stage, when the leaders of Israel and of the Palestine Liberation Organization signed a historic document, the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which laid the foundations for a new stage in their relations. The international community welcomed the Declaration of Principles as a sign of hope and as an indication of political courage, far-sightedness and a genuine desire on both sides to achieve peace and stability in the region. Since then, the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have experienced many vicissitudes and ups and downs, significant breakthroughs and reversals, and in many cases have caused clear frustration.

We are pleased that following a protracted and uneasy stalemate, the parties have at last succeeded in recapturing the *animus societatis* and the momentum of peace and are putting the process back on track. The signing of the Wye River Memorandum and its subsequent ratification and gradual implementation, as well as the beginning of the permanent status talks, show that both parties are committed to moving towards peace in accordance with the existing agreements.

Nevertheless, we are fully aware of how long and difficult this process will be and how tense the situation on the ground remains. In this respect, it is absolutely essential for the agreements to be scrupulously respected and for the parties to refrain from engaging in unilateral acts intended to improve their positions on the ground. In particular, the General Assembly, at its tenth emergency special session, again demonstrated its serious concern at the settlement construction that was being carried out, calling for a conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to consider measures to ensure respect for its provisions. We are grateful to the Swiss Government for its efforts in this regard.

The General Assembly has continued to reiterate the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects with fairness and justice. It is incumbent on all of us as Members of this Organization to strive for that objective. For the peace process between the parties to succeed, it should continue to be based on respect for the universally recognized principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and the relevant United Nations resolutions, notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and on the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination.

Helping the Palestinian people to establish solid foundations for peace through the mobilization of international assistance for economic and social development is another essential task of the international community. The United Nations system, in cooperation with donor countries and the international community as a whole, must intensify efforts in that regard so as to enable the Palestinian people, who have suffered for so long, to begin enjoying the fruits of peace.

I should like to congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its tireless efforts in support of this cause and in implementing the important mandate given to it by the General Assembly.

I should also like to recall the important initiative of the Committee to introduce a new item in the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly, entitled "Bethlehem 2000". The involvement of the United Nations in this worldwide and truly historic celebration, and the adoption, without a vote, of a resolution to mark that millennial event, highlighted the international community's conviction that peace, justice and harmony will finally prevail in that troubled region.

In conclusion, I should like to say that under your leadership, Mr. Chairman, the Committee has done a great deal to bring the question of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and, more broadly, the question of Palestine, into sharp international focus. I have been following the work of the Committee with interest, and I know how eager it is to make a concrete contribution to international endeavours in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, to which we pay tribute with joy, hope and expectation.

I should like to wish the Committee every success in its mission.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): It is now my pleasure to give the floor to the President of the Security Council, Mr. Peter Burleigh.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America), President of the Security Council: At the outset, allow me to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the invitation extended to me, in my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November, to participate in this special meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As President of the Security Council, it gives me much pleasure to join in this annual event in which the international community voices its solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people, as well as its enduring commitment to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

The Council fully recognizes that a solution to this problem is a key element in the effort to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict within the framework of the Oslo accords. For many years, the Security Council has been closely associated with efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Thanks to the work of the parties and of the sponsors, significant positive developments have occurred in recent months, resulting in a promising resumption of the Middle East peace process. The Wye River Memorandum, signed by the Palestinians and Israelis on 23 October 1998, represents a major step forward in this peace process. Implementation of the Memorandum's first phase was successfully completed last week, and the parties will enter into permanent status talks. We share in the international community's overwhelming support for full implementation of the agreements reached. It is now our responsibility to assist in building momentum for this renewal of confidence.

As President of the Security Council, I am particularly gratified that the progress achieved has been reached in the course of negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Council can be proud that these resolutions serve as the basis for the success generated on several bilateral tracks of the peace process in the framework of the Peace Conference on the Middle East convened at Madrid on 30 October 1991. The Wye Memorandum called for a ministerial conference to seek enhanced donor support for economic development in the West Bank and Gaza. Today, the United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, is chairing that ministerial conference in Washington. Soon, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will be hosting a pledging conference of its own.

Many speakers today will speak of the need to support the Palestinian effort. Now is the time to make tangible that support. It is clear there is a need for extensive assistance to the Palestinians as they create effective institutions of self-rule and seek to improve their quality of life.

New opportunities for regional cooperation and development must begin with the development of the Palestinian institutions and economy. Guided by its responsibilities under the Charter, the Security Council will continue to follow closely the peace process and developments in the region and to be committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East for the benefit of all parties concerned, including the Palestinian people.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine, who will read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am honoured to convey the message of President Yasser Arafat addressed to this important formal meeting.

> "On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am pleased to address all present, including the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in order to convey my profound thanks for your wholehearted efforts on behalf of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is a

tangible expression of the support and endorsement of the international community and of its unwavering assistance to the just cause of our people and their legitimate struggle to obtain their freedom and national independence and to rid themselves of the fetters and constraints of the Israeli occupation.

"I also have the pleasure, on this International Day, of conveying once again to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, the respect of our Palestinian people and their deep appreciation for the devoted efforts he is making to ensure the application of the resolutions of the United Nations which guarantee for the Palestinian people the restoration and exercise of their inalienable national rights to return, to determine their destiny and to establish their independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

"I extend my profuse thanks to all the fraternal Arab States and peoples and to all other friendly peoples — in particular to the Arab leaders, the States of the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation, China, Japan, the Islamic States and the non-aligned States — for their continuing solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to reclaim and exercise these inalienable rights, in fulfilment of the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the principles of international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and noble humanitarian values and principles.

"Your commemoration of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People takes on this year, at this particular moment, a special meaning and a far-reaching importance, particularly since our people have just this very month celebrated an anniversary of historic importance to them, namely, the tenth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine, which was promulgated by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988. At that time, it received the sanction and recognition of fraternal and friendly States and constituted a turning point in the history of our people's struggle because it was the expression of their free will, of their momentous sacrifices through more than eight decades, and of their strong and deep-rooted attachment to freedom and independence in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, which have guaranteed their right to establish their own independent State like all other peoples on earth.

"The support of the majority of States Members of the United Nations for the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine was greatly valued and appreciated by our people, and it was and remains a major validation of our just struggle. Today, we are in greater need than ever of the continuation and strengthening of such worldwide solidarity on the part of all our brethren and friends in order to assist the Palestinian people to make a reality of the Declaration of Independence and to implement it on the blessed soil of Palestine during the coming year, after the end of the five-year interim period specified in the Declaration of Principles that was signed in Washington on 13 September 1993.

"We hope that the independent State of Palestine on Palestinian soil will be declared and made a tangible reality in an atmosphere of understanding, cooperation, trust and mutual respect for all the agreements concluded with the Israeli side. The most recent of these was the Wye River Memorandum, on the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Palestinian territories in accordance with the timetable determined in compliance with the Oslo accords, signed at the White House in Washington under the auspices of President Clinton and with his assistance, and in Cairo under the auspices of President Hosni Mubarak and with his support.

"As you are aware, as a result of concentrated efforts and tough and exhausting negotiations, and after a break in the peace process that had lasted for more than 18 months, the Wye River Memorandum was signed in Washington on 23 October 1998, under the sponsorship of the United States and President Clinton. The Memorandum brought renewed hope to the peoples of the region, and to the Palestinian people in particular, that the peace process would be revived and put back on course and would continue to make progress on all tracks, including the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, towards bringing a comprehensive and just peace to the Middle East. We trust that the Government of Israel will continue to implement the provisions of the Memorandum precisely, in good faith and with minimum delay. We are especially interested in the application of the provisions to the Palestinian political and security prisoners, as this is a sensitive issue of great concern to our people.

"While expressing our satisfaction that the Israeli Government has begun implementation of the first stage of the Memorandum as a step in the right

direction, we urge upon that Government the necessity of halting forthwith all unilateral measures. Foremost among such measures are the expropriation of Palestinian land and the settlement activities in occupied Al-Quds al-Sharif, which are intended to Judaize that city. Israeli settlements in other Palestinian areas also continue to be built and expanded, regardless of the fact that they are illegal and constitute a flagrant violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as of the agreements signed by the Palestinian and Israeli parties.

"Such unilateral measures and settlement activities are nothing more than a desperate attempt to impose the status quo. They constitute a time-bomb placed in the path of the peace process and dissipate and destroy all the hopes and endeavours that have been invested in the peace process. The Israeli Government's persistence in this illegal settlement drive may be considered an attempt on its part unilaterally to define and draw up a map of the final status.

"Settlement activities constitute a threat and are completely incompatible with peace. We therefore hope that friendly international endeavours to oblige the Israeli Government to honour its obligations pursuant to the Memorandum it has signed will continue, in order that the peace process may proceed and negotiations on the final status may be resumed in an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding and respect. Only then can just and acceptable solutions be found to the crucial issues under discussion, upon the resolution of which depends the future of the peace process in the whole region. The Palestinian people is determined to declare independence and is sustained in its resolution and commitment by your support for and solidarity with it, and by the justice and legitimacy of its right to make such a declaration.

"The freedom and independence that have been denied us for so long are the dream of every Palestinian, and we greatly appreciate the many resolutions adopted by the United Nations on all aspects of the question of Palestine. These include the decision to raise the level of Palestinian representation, the resolution on Bethlehem 2000, the resolution on the settlement of the question of Palestine by peaceful means, and other resolutions.

"God willing, the young Palestinian state, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, will be positive, prosperous, stable and flourishing and will contribute as an equal partner to the consolidation of a just, equitable and comprehensive peace achieved by courageous parties. This will strengthen cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding and promote peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the region. We trust that all of our friends and all of those who believe in such a peace will recognize and support this state, thereby acknowledging right and justice and upholding internationally binding resolutions and humanitarian values and principles."

The message was signed by Yasser Arafat, President of the state of Palestine, Executive Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, President of the Palestinian National Authority, Gaza, 29 November 1998.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine and ask him to convey the Committee's sincere thanks to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Executive Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian National Authority, for his inspiring message of hope and peace. I should like to assure President Arafat, and, through him, the Palestinian people of the firm determination of the Committee to continue and intensify its efforts within the framework of its mandate to contribute to the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in order to enable the Palestine people to exercise as soon as possible its inalienable national rights.

I shall now suspend the meeting to allow some of our invited guests to leave the Chamber. On behalf of the Committee, I should like once again to thank the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council and the representative of Palestine for their important statements.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call now on His Excellency Mr. John de Saram of Sri Lanka, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, to make a statement on behalf of the Special Committee.

Mr. De Saram (Sri Lanka), Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: I have the honour today — the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — to speak on behalf of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The Special Committee, established by the General Assembly in 1968, has reported each year to the Assembly on the conditions affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories: Gaza, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Arab Syrian Golan.

This year, the Special Committee submitted to the General Assembly its thirtieth report: a reminder, it could be said, that the occupied territories have been occupation for 30 years. The Special Committee sought in its report to convey to the General Assembly its views as to the conditions under which the people in the occupied territories live. They are conditions, the Special Committee found, that do not in a number of respects accord with contemporary international norms as to human rights or with the requirements of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which also applies to the occupied territories.

The overriding impression that has formed in the minds of the three members of the Special Committee — Ms. Absa-Claude Diallo, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations in Geneva, Mr. Abdul-Majid Mohamed, formerly Ambassador of Malaysia to the United States, and I, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York — is a troubling one.

The Israeli authorities have put in place a comprehensive and elaborate system of laws and regulations and administrative measures that are designed to meet the policy objectives of the Israeli Government and to enhance control over the occupied territories and over the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The laws and regulations and administrative measures are so framed that they vest in officials a considerable degree of authority and latitude. They affect important aspects of the lives of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. A rigorous implementation of the laws and regulations and administrative measures, particularly during periods of crisis, creates amongst the Palestinian people a sense of fear, a sense of despondency, a sense of hopelessness. There exists an all-encompassing sense of great tension in the occupied territories, particularly during periods of crisis. And during periods of violence, the exercise of such control makes the lives of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories even more unbearable.

Bitterness at their treatment by the authorities, their sense of dispossession, their despair, caused to a large extent, it seems to the Special Committee, by a lack of progress in the peace process and a lack of tangible benefits for the Palestinian people of the occupied territories, makes the situation in the occupied territories one of the greatest urgency.

The Special Committee regrets that conditions of life in the occupied territories have not improved as had been hoped. The Special Committee in its report to the General Assembly made specific recommendations to the Assembly that concrete steps should be taken to ameliorate the conditions under which the Palestinian people of the occupied territories live. Our recommendations were that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in communication with the Secretary-General, should take such measures as are appropriate to engage in consultation with the appropriate Israeli authorities with respect to the following: permitting long-separated families in the occupied Palestinian territories to meet freely and often; the entire process of detention, including reasons for detention, renewal of periods of detention and treatment of detainees; the use of physical force and torture prohibited by the 1984 United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment during interrogations, detention and imprisonment; the effect of the occupation, including settlements, closures and restrictions on movement, on the children of the occupied territories; facilitating access to educational centres; and ameliorating the conditions under which Palestinians in Gaza travel from Gaza into Israel through the Erez border crossing.

Finally, the Special Committee considers it to be of great importance that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with the Secretary-General, and, above all, in the light of the respect to be always accorded the dignity of the human person, establish a system of continuous communication with Israeli authorities with a view to relieving the very difficult circumstances in which the Palestinians of the occupied territories live, and which give rise to violence which the Special Committee deplores.

The Special Committee is encouraged by the resumption of the peace process and the positive steps that are being taken pursuant thereto, which it hopes will lead

to the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, long awaited by all the peoples of the region.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Nassir, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani in his capacity as Chairman of the twenty-fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Al-Nassir (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is with pleasure that I read out a message from His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani, Foreign Minister of Qatar and Chairman of the twenty-fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The message reads as follows:

"It gives me great pleasure as Chairman of the twenty-fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers to participate, through this statement, in this meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This Day is a sincere reflection of the determination of the international community to champion the Palestinian cause and to assist and support the Palestinian people as they strive to attain their inalienable national rights, including their rights to return to their homeland, to self-determination, to independence and sovereignty, and to the establishment of an independent State of their own on their national soil.

"All the peoples of the world have come to understand all the facts. They know that the obstacles encountered in the peace process threaten to undermine the whole process and to undo the achievements attained so far. They realize that this is simply the inevitable result of the Israeli Government's intransigence and failure to honour its obligation and commitments, thus proving the lack of credibility of Israel's adherence to the bases of the peace process laid down in Madrid, especially the principle of land for peace and the relevant United Nations resolutions, foremost among which are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

"Gravely concerned at the fact that Israel has pursued its settlement expansionist policies in the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif and the occupied Palestinian territories, the OIC affirms its categorical rejection of these policies, which violate the resolutions of international legitimacy. It also emphasizes its rejection of all illegal Israeli actions aimed at changing the legal status, geographic character and demographic composition of the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif and calls on the international community to strive to safeguard and protect the holy places therein.

"The OIC supports the universally held position that the best way to settle the Palestinian question is to implement the bilateral agreements concluded between the Palestinian and Israeli sides and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. It calls once again on the international community on this day to support the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority so that they may establish their own homeland and so that the Palestinians, who have suffered for so long, may enjoy prosperity and stability. It also calls upon the international community to pressure Israel to abide by and implement the resolutions of international legitimacy.

"In conclusion, I would like to express our great appreciation to the United Nations for its outstanding role in supporting the cause of the Palestinian people and rendering assistance to them. I would also like to convey our thanks and appreciation to all those participating in observing this occasion; the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; its Chairman, Ambassador Ibra Deguène Ka; and the members of the Bureau for their sincere and tireless efforts. I wish the Committee every success in its endeavours to enable the Palestinian people fully to realize their legitimate rights and their hopes to establish their own independent State on their national soil. That would doubtless contribute to establishing peace and security, not only in the Middle East but also throughout the world.

"May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank Ambassador Al-Nassir and kindly request him to convey to His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr al-Thani the sincere thanks of the Committee for his important message.

It is now my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Khiphusizi Jele, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, who will read out a message

from His Excellency Mr. Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa, in his capacity as Chairman of the Twelfth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): On this important occasion of solidarity with the Palestinian people, I have the honour to convey the following message from the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency President Nelson Mandela:

> "On behalf of the people of South Africa, the Southern African Development Community, the Non-Aligned Movement and in my own name, I extend greetings to the Palestinian people and to President Yasser Arafat on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We extend our friendship and solidarity to all the Palestinian people, wherever they may be. More than 50 years after the United Nations voted to accord the Palestinian people a national homeland, this dream remains unfulfilled. We express our support for the continuing efforts of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of President Yasser Arafat, to achieve their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination and national independence.
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> "We remain convinced that the only means of ending conflict and bringing peace and security to Palestine, Israel and the region is through negotiations and the faithful implementation of agreements reached so far. For this reason, we are deeply happy to learn of the results of the marathon summit between President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu, under the auspices of United States President Clinton. We also salute His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan for the valuable contribution that he made under extremely difficult circumstances. We congratulate President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu on the signing of the Wye River Memorandum and wish them well in their quest for an equitable and lasting peace. May this agreement give new hope and courage to all in the region and may it indeed revitalize the Middle East peace process, which has been deadlocked for far too long. All the participants deserve our heartfelt congratulations for their courage, vision and spirit of commitment to making peace.
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> "We trust that the implementation of this agreement and, more urgently, the release of all Palestinian political prisoners will eliminate some of the obstacles and rebuild trust, without which no effort at achieving a lasting peace can succeed.
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> "South Africans understand the suffering of the Palestinian people. Palestinians continue to suffer humiliation and economic hardship. Those who live in exile as refugees have long been sustained by their hope for an end to the conflict and the dawning of a better future. The legitimate expectations born at the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 and sustained through an initial period of progress were subsequently dashed by earlier unilateral actions on the part of the Israeli Government. We commend the Palestinian people for their commitment to peaceful negotiations and, in the light of the new start made at Wye River Plantation, urge all parties to recommit themselves to a negotiated settlement and to refrain from acts of violence. We also call upon the Israeli Government to comply with its obligations to withdraw from Palestinian territory timeously, so that further progress can be made.
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> "To the international community, we address the appeal to remain faithful to the goal of achieving a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. The people of Palestine and the whole region need our support for their efforts to put an end to this conflict, which has plagued the world for so long. The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace will not only have an effect on the lives of the people of that region, but will reverberate around the globe and promote the cause of international peace and security in a fundamental way. It is, accordingly, in the interests of all members of the international community to continue to support peacemaking in the Middle East. It has to succeed and each of us carries a responsibility for the success of the peace process in the Middle East, which five years ago showed so much promise.
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> "The Non-Aligned Movement has reaffirmed its traditional and long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people, and its support for the implementation of all United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all of the occupied Palestinian territory. In this vein, and on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Southern African Development Community and the Government of South Africa, I reiterate, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, our solidarity with and support for the

struggle of the Palestinians to live in dignity and peace and, at last, to achieve security in a sovereign country of their own."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to ask Mr. Khiphusizi Jele to convey to Mr. Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Committee's sincere gratitude for his important message of support.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Michel Kafando, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations, to read a message from Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, in his capacity as current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), my country, Burkina Faso, would like, through me, to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for having invited us to this commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The current Chairman of the OAU, Mr. Blaise Compaore, has sent an official message on this occasion, which I will be reading shortly. He requested me to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of his complete support for you, for the members of the Bureau and for the other members of the Committee.

Here is the text of the message addressed to the Committee by President Blaise Compaore, current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity:

"The commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People offers me the welcome opportunity to convey to the Committee, in my capacity as President of Burkina Faso and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, this message expressing all the sympathy of the African continent for the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people and for their ceaseless efforts to achieve self-determination.

"Established by General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, this Day is designed to allow people throughout the world to demonstrate their support for the Palestinian people.

"Indeed, since the end of the cold war and of the decolonization period, humanity has had the right to hope to be able to live in a world of peace, justice and tolerance. During the last decade, the international community has mobilized itself to achieve these objectives.

"In the Middle East the various international actors have spared no effort to achieve a definitive settlement of the Palestinian question, which first arose in 1947 following the creation of the State of Israel.

"Africa has always been a party to these efforts of the international community. Thus, from Madrid in 1991 to the Oslo agreements of 1993, the Organization of African Unity, true to the spirit of its founding fathers, unconditionally supported the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination and for the realization of their inalienable rights to establish a sovereign State.

"Africa is also pleased that, after a deadlock of several months, the recent Wye River Memorandum, signed on 23 October 1998 by the Palestinians and Israelis, has provided new prospects for an irreversible Middle East peace process.

"However, it remains imperative for both parties to demonstrate wisdom and goodwill and to redouble their efforts to allow the effective implementation of this agreement.

"We appeal to the international community and to the United Nations to provide unfaltering support for the initiatives to achieve the minimum political, economic and social conditions necessary for the reconciliation of the Palestinians and the Israelis. In particular, these conditions include the application of the fundamental principles of international law and of the agreements already reached, strict respect for the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the question of Palestine and the promotion of economic and social development, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank, where the situation is disturbing and where there are acute health, education and employment problems.

"Despite the magnitude of the tasks that remain to be carried out on the road to peace, Africa remains confident and ardently hopes that the goodwill and the readiness of the protagonists will allow the current negotiations to succeed.

"In reiterating its faith in the capacity of the United Nations — the ideal framework for resolving the question of Palestine satisfactorily, and with respect for legitimacy — Africa, on this commemorative Day, reaffirms its solidarity with and its support for the struggle and emancipation of the Palestinian people.

"Africa calls for the establishment of a just and lasting peace, a condition that would allow the valiant Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to achieve their main objectives."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to ask Mr. Michel Kafando to convey to Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, the Committee's sincere thanks for his important message of support.

I now give the floor to Mr. Said Kamal, Assistant Secretary-General for Palestinian Affairs of the League of Arab States, who will read a message from Mr. Ahmed Esmat Abdul-Maguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Kamal (League of Arab States) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a great pleasure for me to address the Committee on behalf of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and to congratulate it on all its initiatives in support of just causes throughout the world, including the Palestinian cause. It is a particular pleasure for me to participate in commemorating this Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the international community's solidarity with the Palestinian people and to help it exercise its inalienable rights.

Our commemoration today is of special importance because it coincides with the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an instrument through which the entire world has sought to work for justice and equality among all peoples. We are commemorating the anniversary at a time when the people of the world are focusing their attention on the Middle East, genuinely hoping for a just and equitable peace that will restore to the Palestinian people its legitimate rights, a cause for which the Committee has worked so hard, and enable the Palestinian people to establish its own State, like all the other peoples of the world.

The United Nations, in keeping with its lofty principles and objectives has, over many years, sought to keep the issue of Palestine in everyone's mind so as to enable the rule of law to triumph and to sensitize the peoples of the world to the injustice that has afflicted the Palestinian people since Israel blocked the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which urged the return of the Palestinian people to their homes. The United Nations has played an important role in ensuring that the Palestinian cause remains a presence in the international arena. Those efforts are part and parcel of the current momentum in the peace process.

Last October, the General Assembly invited Member States to continue their efforts to support the League of Arab States in the peace initiative. General Assembly resolution 53/8 invited the Secretariat of the United Nations and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States to cooperate so as to achieve the principles of the United Nations Charter and consolidate peace and security throughout the world.

Allow me to take this opportunity, on behalf of Mr. Ahmed Esmat Abdul-Maguid, to thank the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their efforts. I should also like to state the readiness of the League of Arab States to work in cooperation with the United Nations in the cause of peace throughout the world. Among the achievements to be noted on this anniversary is resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998, which accorded a number of additional rights and privileges to Palestine, thus enhancing the level of its participation in the activities of the United Nations. We also witnessed the participation in the General Assembly debate of Chairman Yasser Arafat. These developments open new vistas for cooperation and represent progress towards granting permanent membership status to Palestine in accordance with the initiatives of the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

It is a positive sign that when the General Assembly decided to increase the participation of Palestine, its decision was based on resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, which called for Palestine to be divided into a Jewish State and an Arab State, and also on resolution 43/177 of 15 December 1988, by which the General Assembly acknowledged the proclamation by the Palestine National Council of the State of Palestine.

The Arab world has made efforts to support the role of the Arab negotiators. During the last Summit meeting of the League of Arab States, as at previous annual sessions, the participation of various delegations, including the delegation of Palestine, presided over by Mr. Kaddoumi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, made it possible for negotiations to take place in an effort to support the position of Palestine. We believe that such concerted action in a particularly complex environment acts as a safeguard for a unified Arab position with regard to all phases of the peace process.

The communiqué of the 108th session of the League of Arab States, presided over by Saudi Arabia, summarized the Arab position on the basis of three main points. It referred to the resumption of negotiations on three tracks, stating that negotiations with Syria should be resumed from where they left off, and a commitment should be made to observing the outcome of those negotiations; that there should be a resumption of negotiations with Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978); and that the contractual commitments with Palestine should be observed, including meeting the deadlines for the interim phase and beginning the final phase, which should lead to self-determination for the Palestinian people and to the establishment of an independent State.

The communiqué also welcomed the American position, which we have seen develop through Mrs. Albright's visit to the region. This position was summarized by Mrs. Albright in her remarks to the Washington Press Club, in which she noted the United States position, which supports the central position taken at the Madrid Conference, as well as the principle of land for peace, the implementation of Security Council resolutions and the achievement of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people. The position of the United States is very positive, and we urge Israel to follow up and respond to it. The communiqué also underscored the importance of United Nations resolutions of international legitimacy on Palestinian rights and the importance of working to implement them.

Everyone saw that the peace process was threatened. Then the world witnessed the Wye River talks, from which so much responsibility and wisdom emerged and which showed the position of Chairman Arafat with regard to the blackmailing and procrastination characteristic of Israeli policy. Everyone witnessed the special effort made by President Clinton of the United States and by the American Secretary of State, which made it possible to achieve a Memorandum taking note of the earlier agreements reached in Oslo. The commitments made called for the redeployment of Israeli forces in certain parts of the West Bank, the partial or entire restitution of territory to the Palestinian National Authority and observance of human rights with a view to creating the necessary climate for peace.

Israeli redeployment is an important factor because land is at the core of the conflict and the restoration of peace is based on the return of the lands to their legitimate owners. In other words, each parcel of land that is restored to Arabs is another step towards the recovery of occupied territories. This corresponds to the principle of land for peace and contradicts the statements made by certain Israeli authorities that it is a question of security for security. This is meaningless because peace benefits everyone, and in keeping with norms of international legitimacy that land belongs to the Arab people because it was occupied by force, and its restoration is the very basis of peace.

With respect to security measures, we should underscore that protecting the peace process from acts of violence is not the responsibility solely of the Palestinian party. The Israeli party is also aware of the forces that stand in the way of genuine peace.

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States summed up the League's position vis-à-vis the Wye River Memorandum as follows:

> "The Memorandum, which was signed with the participation of the United States and Jordan, represents an important step towards sincere implementation of the peace process. We must avail ourselves of this positive opportunity to resolve various aspects of the conflict and ensure the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories with a view to establishing a Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.
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> "The Syrian and Lebanese positions have contributed to thwarting Israeli arrogance. We can find evidence of this in Arabic public opinion. I think this position has begun to be heard in the United States itself. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyck indicated in mid-November that President Clinton had recently informed President Assad of his commitment to restart negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks.
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> "The League of Arab States considers that the blockades against Iraq and Libya should also be lifted

and that the two countries should be allowed to manage their affairs as they see fit so that those countries can continue the process of development and growth and resume their role for the advancement of peace and progress in the world.

"The League of Arab States is concerned over the achievement of that objective. We have sought the best ways and means of participating with the various parties concerned to develop a mechanism that will make it possible to lift the embargo against the Arab peoples and to draft an international convention that will prohibit recourse to an economic blockade against any people, regardless of the reasons for that blockade."

The League of Arab States considers that the true challenge now is to maintain the international momentum towards the final phase and to commence the final phase, which would lead to international legitimacy and the establishment of a Palestinian State. Those negotiations should enable the Palestinian people to exercise their sovereignty over their lands in accordance with the declaration of the Palestinian National Council that I referred to at the beginning of my statement. Thus, the Palestinian people would be able to exercise its right of return in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

I hope that when we commemorate the Day of Solidarity next year the results of the Committee's efforts will have come to fruition and Palestine will have its rights restored and peace will have returned to the Middle East.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to ask Mr. Kamal to convey the Committee's sincere thanks to Mr. Ahmed Esmat Abdul-Maguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, for his message.

I now call on Mr. David Graybeal, representative of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine.

Mr. Graybeal (International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine): I am honoured to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, and on behalf of the global network of citizen-volunteers who work in the non-profit organizations concerned about human rights, justice and peace in the Middle East.

We are grateful for the encouragement of our activities as non-governmental organizations that we receive from the United Nations through the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and from the Division for Palestinian Rights. From the onset of the problems of peace and justice in the Middle East, we have applauded and endorsed the actions of the United Nations. We watched with respect the work that led to the original design in 1947 for the partition of Palestine into two sovereign States. We have endorsed the resolutions of the Security Council, especially those that have repeated the rule that territory may not be gained by force of arms.

But we have been dismayed by the fact that, while the Security Council's resolutions on Iraq have been enforced by severe sanctions and the use of force against Iraq, the refusal of Israel to conform to similar resolutions has been accepted without penalty. In *The New York Times* of Friday, 27 November 1998, reporter Stephen Kinzer quotes a Ms. Khalidi in Amman as saying

"When the UN demands that Israel withdraw from occupied territories and Israel refuses, the world does nothing. But with Saddam, he must do what the UN says or he is bombed. It is so very unfair." (*"Many Arabs See Double Standard for Israel", p. 15*)

The non-governmental organizations concerned about Palestine respect the United Nations, but we cannot accept in silence the unequal, unjust treatment it gives to these two States.

In the search for justice and peace, the non-governmental organizations support statehood for Palestine. In Geneva on 28 August 1997, the International Coordinating Committee on the Question of Palestine agreed on a bold, unprecedented action, as follows:

"The NGO participants declared individually and collectively that they, as NGOs, recognize the State of Palestine with borders in conformity with those announced by the Palestine National Council in its Declaration of Independence of 1988. This involves full national sovereignty and self-determination for the entire Palestinian people, inside their country and in exile, to be exercised in the territory encompassing the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions. The NGO participants called upon all NGOs worldwide to join them in this solemn declaration and to petition the Governments of their

respective nations to recognize the State of Palestine on this basis."

The non-governmental organizations view the events of the coming year with both hope and anxiety. We will continue unabated our work in the fields of human rights and development. We ask the Committee to press the General Assembly and the Security Council to exert the strong leadership the founders of this body envisioned for it, in the establishment of peace with justice in the Middle East.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank Mr. Graybeal for the valuable contribution that non-governmental organizations have always made to the work of the Committee.

I now have the honour to announce that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has received messages of support and solidarity from many heads of State or Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. The texts of the messages will be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights, but I would like to read out the list of names of those who have sent them.

We have received messages from the following Heads of State: His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam; His Excellency Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil; His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, President of the Republic of Chile; His Excellency Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, President of the Republic of Indonesia; His Excellency Mr. Khamtai Siphandon, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal; Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; His Excellency Mr. Liamine Zeroual, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria; His Excellency Mr. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation; His Excellency Le Général de Brigade Lansana Conte, President of the Republic of Guinea; His Excellency Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan; His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt; His Majesty King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar; His Excellency Mr. Kim Jung Nam, President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe; His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Baré Mainassara, President of the Republic of Niger; His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia; His Excellency Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia; His Excellency Mr. Tran Duc Luong, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; His Excellency Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; and His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

We have also received messages from the following Heads of Government: His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; His Excellency Mr. Chuan Leekpai, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand; His Excellency Mr. Zhu Rongji, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China; His Excellency Mr. Eddie Fenech Adami, Prime Minister of Malta; His Excellency Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India; His Excellency Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey; His Excellency Mr. Syarghei Ling, Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus; His Excellency Mr. Pakalitha Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho; His Excellency Mr. Said Musa, Prime Minister of Belize; and Her Excellency Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The following Ministers for Foreign Affairs have sent messages: His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic; His Excellency Mr. Masahiko Koumura, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan; His Excellency Mr. Borys Tarasyuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine; His Excellency Mr. Yusef Bin Alawi Bin Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman; His Excellency Mr. José Ayala Lasso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador; His Excellency Mr. Guido di Tella, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina; and His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Fernandez de Soto, Minister for Foreign Relations of Colombia.

The Government of Uruguay has also sent a message.

We have also received messages from representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, President of the Council of Ministers of the European Union; and His Excellency Mr. Azzedine Laraki, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

From specialized agencies, we have received a message from His Excellency Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Finally, we have received messages from the following non-governmental organizations: the Palestine Federation of Peru; the General Union of Palestinian Women; Professionals for Peace between Israel and Palestine, in Mexico; the Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue; and the Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as a whole, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State or Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations I have just mentioned, as well as to all participants for their praiseworthy efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and for the steadfast support they have always given to the objectives and activities of the Committee.

The statements we have heard and the messages of solidarity that we have received today demonstrate once again the determination of the international community to progress towards the establishment of peace in the Middle East through the attainment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with United Nations resolutions and international law.

I can affirm that all members of the Committee will spare no effort towards the achievement of those objectives.

I now have the honour and the pleasure to call on His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Mr. Kaddoumi (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the conclusion of this meeting convened to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is my pleasure on behalf of Palestine, on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and on behalf of the Palestinian people to convey our profound thanks to the monarchs, heads of State or Government, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, heads of specialized agencies and all others who participated in this observance with messages of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

This international solidarity gives the Palestinian people confidence in the continued support of the States of the world for its right to establish an independent State of its own on its national soil. This solidarity strengthens our confidence in the capacity of the international community and the United Nations to help achieve the objective of enabling the oppressed and colonized peoples of the world to exercise their right to self-determination without foreign intervention.

There is no doubt that the statement of the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Louise Fréchette, was an expression of that solidarity. The observation that on this day 51 years ago the General Assembly adopted a resolution which, if implemented, would have created an Arab and a Jewish State in Palestine, living side by side, embodies a wise approach to this issue. The Deputy Secretary-General stressed the need to address not only the manifestations but also the causes of violence. She called for a future of peace, cooperation and good-neighbourliness, and rightly observed that the steady decline of the Palestinian economy in recent years was largely due to the impact of security measures in the occupied territories, the lack of free movement of persons and goods between the West Bank and Gaza, and the Palestinians' lack of control over their natural resources.

It is the insightful view of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, that the United Nations has a central and indispensable role to play, because its resolutions constitute the frame of reference for any international effort to settle the question of Palestine.

I convey to you, Mr. Chairman, our profound gratitude for your continuous efforts. Once again we thank those who made statements or communicated messages in support of the Palestinian cause. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, the Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and all others who participated in this meeting or who sent messages or otherwise expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): We were all inspired, and filled with determination and hope, by the important statement Mr. Kaddoumi just made.

Before adjourning this solemn meeting, I wish to thank everyone who made this meeting possible, in particular representatives and other participants, as well as the members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department of Conference Services and the Department of Public Information, and everyone who works behind the scenes, including those who provide for our security.

I also want to remind everyone that a Palestinian cultural exhibit presented by the Committee in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine will be opened at 6 p.m. today in the public lobby of the General Assembly building. This year's exhibit, entitled "Bethlehem 2000", is composed of a photographic exhibition and a display of artefacts. The opening of the exhibit will be followed by a reception to which all are cordially invited.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.